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Missionaries dodge death in front yard

KABONG, Uganda (BP) — It was an average September day for the family of John and Linda Witte, International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries in Uganda: their four children were playing in the yard, and AK-47 rifle fire cracked in the distance.

In northern Uganda, gunfire is a way of life if you live among the ever-warring Karamojong people — but suddenly a loud boom echoed across the desolate valley. It sounded like rocket fire, and it was close.

Four Ugandan army tanks and a personnel carrier had rolled in to confront Karamojong warriors — in the Wittes' front yard.

John and Linda, who are members of First Church in Midland, Texas, say they never feel endangered by the everyday fighting but that day they were caught in the middle. Government troops fired over the house at warriors on the hill behind the missionary compound. "Bullets whizzed by," Linda said. "The kids were crawling on the ground army style to stay away from the gunfire. We could hear big blasts and booms off in the distance."

John grabbed the radio and tried to make contact with other missionaries. He was surprised when the message went out clearly. In this remote area, the radio often didn't work.

After hours of gunfire, the Wittes finally heard a break in the fighting. John sent Linda, their four kids, and two house guests from the United States out the back. The group fled the compound on foot. All the roads were closed.

"When we got to a clearing by some big rocks and sat under the tree, we met up with some of our people from the villages," Linda recounted. "When we saw each other, we all rejoiced. The women and I started singing Bible songs right there under the tree."

John had stayed behind to keep radio contact with the plane that was coming to evacuate them. The kids stood on a boulder, watching through binoculars for their father. Their teenage daughter Jordan caught a glimpse of him running from the house with three Ugandans. Then a rocket exploded just 200 meters from the fleeing men.

"I thought my dad was hit," she said. "I kept watching, and then there he was. He came running out of the dust. He and the other men were OK."



ROCKY REFUGE — Linda and John Witte and their children pose on the boulders to which they fled for refuge when soldiers of the Ugandan army engaged Karamojong warriors in a firefight in the Wittes' front yard. (BP photo by Sue Sprengle)

The reunited family had to find a way to get to an airstrip six miles away. The roads were closed, and even the walking paths were too dangerous to take. Their friends from the village led them through the bush to the circling plane.

"In that one experience, we bonded with our friends like never before," Linda said. "Since we were on foot, just like them, we were hiding in the bushes from the bullets. In fact, we were completely dependent on them to help us stay safe."

The Wittes hope this new bond will open the door to sharing the Gospel — something the Karamojong have resisted in the past.

Because they deal with drought, famine, and war on a daily basis, the Karamojong are so busy trying to survive that they don't have much time for anything else, Linda said.

In the past year, however, God has opened doors and a missionary team has been able to begin chronological Bible storying. "We had no chance of getting the Gospel to them in our own efforts. It's only through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit," Linda said. "There is

such a darkness there. The Holy Spirit is the only thing that can penetrate."

"These people are beginning to understand. Storying the Bible is really breaking through the darkness as they learn God's Word and hide it in their hearts."

Such a breakthrough is desperately needed, John Witte noted. Of the 120,000 Dodoth people — the Karamojong subgroup to which the Wittes minister — only about 500 are evangelicals. While the New Testament has been translated into their language, the Karamojong are an oral people, and almost no one reads. The Jesus film, however, is available in their language.

The Wittes ask their supporters to pray that the Bible storying groups will continue despite the recent unrest and fighting. Their children specifically ask others to pray for friends and playmates left behind.

"We left on the plane and went somewhere safe with food and water," Jordan Witte said. "Our friends had to stay. They could not escape. They left their homes and all of their food behind to find safety. We don't know if they are OK or not."

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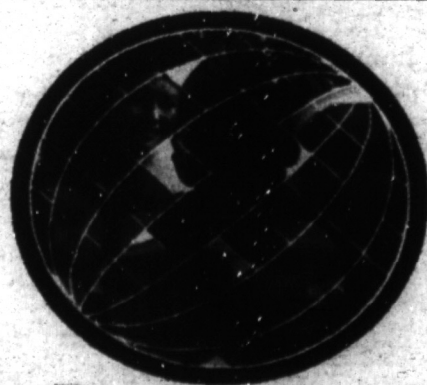
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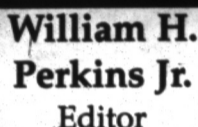


**That all peoples
may know Him**

**Week of Prayer for
International Missions
and
International Mission Study**
Nov. 28–Dec. 5, 2004

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®
National Goal: \$150 million

Our Goal: _____



EDITOR EMERITUS
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Get ready. We are about to be assaulted by another Hollywood homage to sexual indulgence and deviancy — apparently the only kind of movie in which many modern American filmmakers think we are interested.

This time, the late zoologist-turned-sex-researcher Alfred C. Kinsey of Indiana University will be celebrated, in the forthcoming film entitled *Kinsey*, as the misunderstood and persecuted clarion of the sexual revolution in this country. For all the perils and tragedies wrought by that revolution, it would serve us well to understand who Kinsey really was and steer clear of the movie.

Kinsey's seminal work, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, was published in 1948. The book was a sensation, billed widely as the first purely scientific study of the sexuality of *homo sapiens*. His eagerly-awaited follow-up book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, created an even larger stir in an era when talk of sexual matters had not yet become a cultural obsession.

H. Jr. It didn't seem to matter that his methodology was roundly criticized by peers (he was previously known only as an expert on the life cycle of the gall wasp) or that he came to inexplicable conclusions based on flawed research (10% of the male U.S. population at any given time is homosexual, for example). He was considered a groundbreaker, the father of the sexual revolution.

There's much more to the Kinsey story, however. Concerned Women for America (CWA), a conservative group, was so disturbed about the misleading nature of the movie that they put together a web site to tell the real story (www.cwfa.org/kinsey.asp).

"According to early reports, the movie, directed by homosexual activist Bill Condon, glosses over the stunning fact that much of Kinsey's work has been revealed as fraud, and that he aided and abetted the molestation of hundreds of children in order to obtain data on 'child sexuality.'

"Kinsey's work has been instrumental

in advancing acceptance of pornography, homosexuality, abortion, and condom-based sex education, and his disciples even today are promoting a view of children as 'sexual beings.' Their ultimate goal: to normalize pedophilia, or 'adult-child sex,'" according to the CWA web site.

The truth is that Kinsey was a twisted individual who has been accused of pressuring his staff and even his own wife into sexual experimentation for the sake of his "research." He recruited pedophiles — some of them already convicted of sexual crimes — to molest children, then recorded the children's cries of agony as indications of their enjoyment of the act.

Therein lies an interesting side story. Indiana University, where all Kinsey's perversions were committed in the name of science, to this day proudly touts its Kinsey Institute as promoting "interdisciplinary research and scholarship in the fields of human sexuality, gender, and reproduction." Also to this day, the university refuses to make available any of Kinsey's vast documentation of his crimes against children, although the files are known to exist.

All the better to keep the donations flowing.

Kinsey critic Judith Reisman, president of The Institute For Media Education, has written, "The Kinsey Institute's data on child orgasm are, at best, a human concoction or, at worst, the results of child molestation. In either case, the Kinsey Institute is guilty of criminal activity and their findings on all subjects are suspect and misleading."

Yet Hollywood continues to offer up people like Alfred Kinsey and pornographer Larry Flynt (The People vs. Larry Flynt) as champions of the American way of life,

From the Writer-Director of "Gods and Monsters"
Liam Neeson Laura Linney

Let's talk about SEX

[illegible]

without ever mentioning their darker sides. How troubling that should be for all of us, since filmmakers have been called the "de facto historians of the 21st century."

When will Hollywood make a big-budget Oscar contender about the life of Billy Graham? When will we see an award-winning documentary of the religious lives of the Founding Fathers? How about a made-for-TV movie series on Roger Williams, the New England firebrand preacher who defied the religious establishment of his day?

As the old saying goes, don't hold your breath.

I am still overwhelmed with joy and praise to God as I think of Southern Baptists giving \$136.2 million to the 2003 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. It represents the largest dollar increase in the offering's 115-year history. But more importantly, it enabled the International Mission Board to appoint more missionaries to impact a lost world with the Gospel.

Thank you, Southern Baptists! You felt God's desire for every soul to know Him and give Him the honor He is due. You were distressed that qualified missionaries were being held back for lack of finances. And you responded with a vision and passion only God's spirit can inspire! We are especially grateful to Woman's Missionary Union for their wholehearted partnership in encouraging Southern Baptists to step up to this tremendous challenge.

Because you gave so unselfishly, the Light of the World is penetrating more darkness than ever before. But the need to send more

A black and white portrait of Robert A. M. Jones, a man with glasses and a suit, smiling.

*By Jerry Rankin, president
International Mission Board*

workers into the harvest
could not be more critical.

We have a particular burden for South Asia, which includes India and six surrounding countries. It's home to almost 1.4 billion people —

mostly Hindu or Muslim. Multitudes die every day without ever hearing about salvation in Jesus.

Yet God is at work there in great power. In one country, about 165,000 new believers



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were baptized in 2003 — including more than 160,000 former Muslims!

Missionaries are relying on God to provide support through Southern Baptists so they can continue to nurture such movements in South Asia and throughout the world. We cannot afford to allow our level of giving to regress.

The goal for the 2004 Lottier Moon Christmas Offering is \$150 million, which will require a 10% increase over last year's phenomenal level of giving.

Please join me in accepting the challenge of this lofty goal that is worthy of the Great Commission challenge our Lord has given us. The task is enormous, but God's Spirit is moving. May He move in our hearts as He is moving to touch a lost world.

The International Mission board is headquartered in Richmond, Va.

Rankin is a native Mississippian and graduate of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton.

Iraqi Christians leaving for safer confines

AMMAN, Jordan (BP) — A quiet but steady hemorrhaging of Iraq's ancient Christian presence is underway and little is being done to stem the flow, Compass Direct news service reported Oct. 6.

Written threats, kidnappings, bombings, and murder by Muslim extremists are driving thousands of Iraq's minority Christian population out of their ancestral homeland, fleeing for safety to neighboring Jordan and Syria.

"The Christians are experiencing an absence of leadership," Hala Hikmat, a recent arrival from Baghdad who has joined thousands of her countrymen in Syria, told Compass Direct. "We have no leaders who are communicating our urgent needs to the authorities, so consequently each person has to take care of themselves." Hikmat said their urgent needs are for protection and for someone to take a stand on Christians' behalf.

A string of church bombings in August and September caused 30,000-40,000 Christians to flee the country, Compass Direct said, according to estimates by Iraqi government and church officials. Hundreds more families who are part of Iraq's 750,000 Christians are leaving each week.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said the figures are too high, and UNHCR offices in Amman and Damascus acknowledge it is hard to know exactly how many Iraqi Christians are currently in Jordan

and Syria, Compass Direct reported.

Of the 4,000 Iraqi families officially registered as refugees with the agency in Damascus, more than half are Christians. It is believed that there are larger numbers of Iraqis in Syria because it is cheaper to live there than in Jordan. Iraqi Christians also said they have stronger cultural and spiritual ties to Syria. Syrian authorities estimate there are about 300,000 Iraqis in the country.

"The Syrian government has been extremely generous to the Iraqis," said Abdelhamed El Ouali, the UNHCR head in Damascus, according to Compass Direct. "It has kept the borders open without political considerations. And it believes it has a sacred duty to allow Iraqis who need safety to stay as long as necessary. But I am afraid if the numbers continue to rise dramatically without any international assistance, the situation here could change."

A member of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic community refused to give her name to Compass Direct for fear of reprisals against family members, but she said she lived near one of the churches that was bombed in Baghdad last August.



ON MISSION — Larry Ledford (left) and Hal Newell, both of Calvary Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., prepare to pray with an Iraqi family as the two help deliver food sent earlier this year by Southern Baptist churches across America. Iraqi Christians are being forced to flee their country under threat of death. (BP photo)

"I received a letter threatening me. It also claimed that the church where I served would explode while I was inside," she said, "unless I paid \$300,000. We are poor people and do not have such money, so I took my husband and my son and we fled to Syria."

The synchronized bombings of five churches on August 1 and a car bombing at a Baghdad church on September 10 sent shock waves through the Christian community. Iraqi officials blamed al-Qaeda ally and Jordanian terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi for the attacks.

A university student visiting Syria from Baghdad said she wanted to attend mass at the Chaldean Church of St. Terese of Little Jesus while she was in Damascus because there was little opportunity to worship back home without fear, according to Compass Direct.

"We can't attend services because all of the churches are threatened with explosions," she said. "No one knows what will happen now."

Most of Iraq's Christians are Chaldean eastern-rite Catholics who are autonomous from Rome

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but who recognize the pope's authority. Other Christian denominations in Iraq include Roman and Syrian Catholics, Assyrians, Greek, Syrian and Armenian Orthodox, Presbyterians, Anglicans and evangelicals.

One Baptist woman from Baghdad who also refused to give her name said she had taken to wearing a head covering when going outside, simply to protect herself and her children, Compass Direct reported.

"It is very risky now to go out on the streets in Iraq without a scarf on your head," she said. "When I dared to do it, people shouted at me from a passing car that I had to respect Islamic traditions in a country where Muslims are the majority."

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS
THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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Increases noted

Southern Baptist missionaries witnessed double-digit increases in eight of their 13 categories of work in 2003, including for the first time more than 500,000 baptisms. While more than 5,000 people groups still have little or no access to the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, Southern Baptist missionaries and their overseas partners also opened work among 192 new people groups during 2003. Those new works included the engagement of 146 unreached people groups with a total population of more than 359 million. Southern Baptist missionaries and their overseas partners baptized 510,357 believers in 2003, a net increase of 76,836 (17.7%) and the first time the number of baptisms has passed a half million. The total number of congregations worldwide reached 87,419, a net increase of 15,516 (21.6%) over 2002. That growth was fed by 16,721 new congregations, an increase of 8,314 (98.9%) over 2002. A total of 10,031 outreach groups also were started in 2002. While that represented 38 fewer than in 2002, it still brought the total number of outreach groups to 47,103, a net increase of 5,648 (13.6%) for the year. In other categories:

- Overseas church membership surpassed 7.04 million, a net increase of 336,411, for an annual growth rate of five percent;
- Bible teaching enrollment increased 182,806 (5.1%) to 3.77 million;
- New believers in discipleship training increased 42.8% (128,035) to 426,849;
- Church members in discipleship training grew 24.9% (180,255) to 894,470;
- Non-residential leadership training enrollment grew by 27,832 (47.8%) to 86,059;
- Residential leadership training programs showed a net increase of 557 (2.6%) to 22,366;
- The total number of international missionaries fielded by Baptist partners grew at an annual rate of 11.9% to 1,523;
- The total number of Baptist partner "home" missionaries dropped by 231 (-9%) to 2,339, in part because of better application of the definition of home missionary as someone who goes to a people group other than his own within the same country.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Atlanta Billy Graham crusade tallies an average evening attendance of 62,500 — a record high for the Graham organization. More than 78,000 attended the youth night services, the largest attendance for any event at the Georgia Dome.

20 years ago

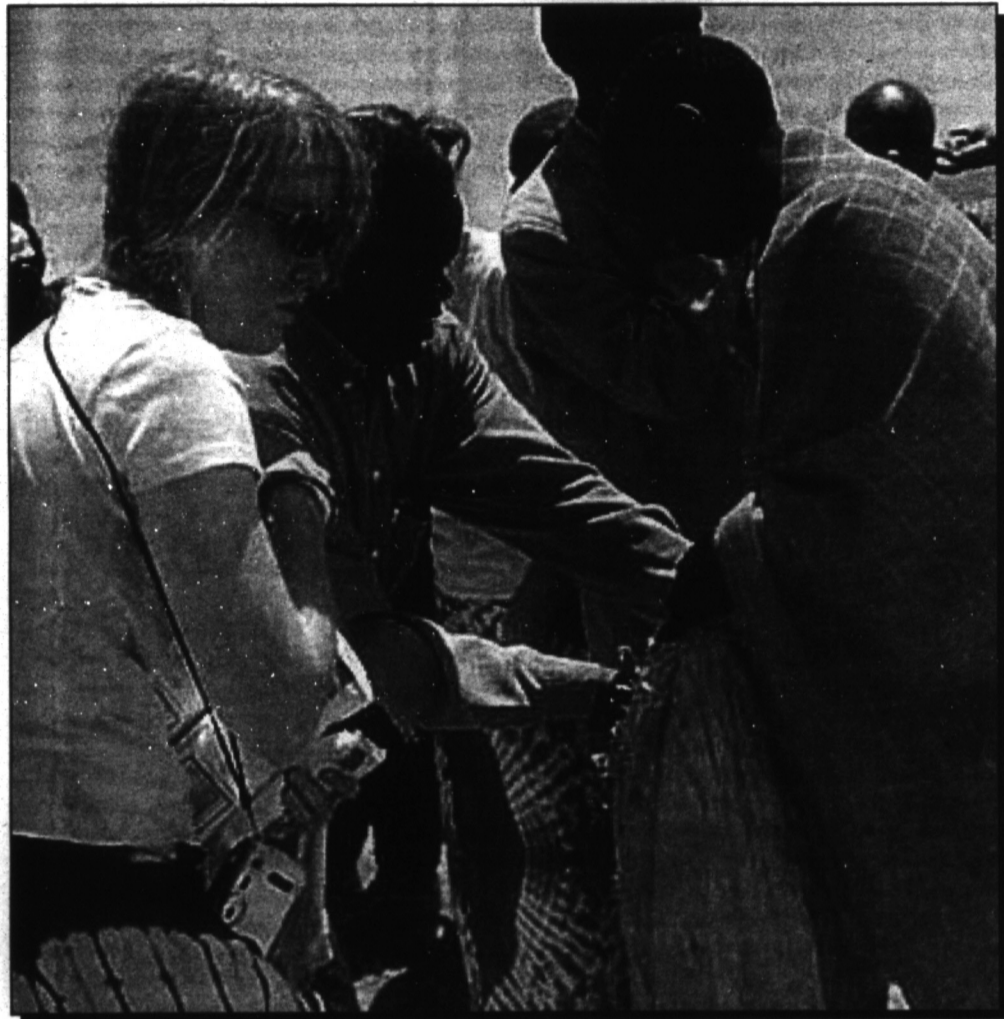
The old Baptist Hospital in Jackson, built in 1914, will be demolished to make way for a medical arts complex just across State Street from the new 646-bed complex that replaced the old building in 1976.

30 years ago

SBC-affiliated college enrollments for the current school year throughout the nation will reach a total of about 10.2% above those of last year, according to R. Orin Cornett, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Education Commission.

Pair of Miss. women fight famine in Kenya

SUSWA, Kenya (BP) — Maasai women walk down the dusty path, lugging babies on their back. Following close behind, men push old, rusty bicycles to the meeting place.



MISSISSIPPIAN ON MISSION — Erin Schmidt of Hattiesburg delivers an armful of corn meal and salt to a Kenyan's waiting sack. The Mississippi Baptist woman is serving as a one-year volunteer missionary in Kenya. (BP photo by Jon Jamar)

A large truck picks its way down the cattle path to the small Baptist church located in the proverbial middle of nowhere. A small cheer erupts from the waiting crowd. For these people, the sacks of flour, corn meal, and milk on the truck are a welcome sight.

Famine has struck Kenya in a big way, with more than 2.3 million people requiring emergency assistance. For these subsistence farmers, the shortage of rain over the past three years has left them with no food. Kenyan President Kibaki declared the famine a national disaster and asked the international community for assistance.

Members of Tigoni Baptist Fellowship, along with faculty, students and staff from the Kenya Baptist Theological College and Brackenhurst Baptist International Conference Center, responded to Kibaki's call for assistance.

The Kenyans raised money from donations within the church and two institutions. When volunteer missionaries working at Brackenhurst wrote home telling what students were doing to help famine victims, a group of Mississippi Baptists decided to get involved too.

Kellie Burnham and Erin Schmidt, both one-year volunteer missionaries, were overwhelmed with the response from friends and family back home.

"I can't believe that people we know would be so faithful — even though they are half-way around the world," said Burnham, who is from Kosciusko. "They made a difference in the life of a village."

When all efforts were combined, there was enough money to buy two weeks' worth of food for more than 600 families. The food was delivered to a Baptist church where the crowd sat waiting. Before handing out the aid, seminary students preached and led a worship service.

"This food may fill your stomach, but it will not fill that hunger you have for Jesus," one seminary student told the crowd. Four women responded to the invitation to open their hearts to Christ.

After a prayer of thanksgiving, the people lined up to receive the gifts of food.

Schmidt, a resident of Hattiesburg, said she didn't know what she would find in this area. The volunteer missionaries described the area as dry and barren. Skin-and-bones cattle roam around, searching for grass to eat on the brown, brittle landscape.

"I've seen hungry people in America but not starving people," she said. "It wasn't like what you see on television about starving Africans. These people were definitely hungry and didn't have anything to eat. They were so thankful and happy."

Aid organizations and local Kenyan churches and charities are trying to meet demands of the famine. The Kenyan Red Cross Society said more than 60% of Kenya's territory has been affected by the drought.

Seminary students and staff at Brackenhurst are in the midst of planning another relief trip. This time, they will head to northern Kenya — an area even more desolate and dry.

Southern Baptists have the opportunity to give to hunger relief causes such as this through the World Hunger Fund, a Southern Baptist offering with 80% of the funds going to the International Mission Board for international hunger needs and 20% going to the North American Mission Board for domestic hunger needs in North America.

Fully 100% of gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions are used to support the IMB work around the world.

'New wave' missions partnership taking shape

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — A "new wave" of missions outreach has been launched by four evangelical organizations that have commissioned the first overseas workers in a unique partnership focused on billions of people who cannot be reached with traditional methods.

Epic Partners — a global missions partnership founded by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB), Campus Crusade for Christ, Wycliffe, and Youth With A Mission — uses chronological Bible storying to communicate God's Word and plant churches among unreached people groups that are "oral learners."

An estimated four billion people — about two-thirds of the world's population — learn through the spoken word rather than the written word. Mission efforts focused on increasing literacy rates and providing written materials simply do not work in any significant way, said Avery Willis, recently retired IMB senior vice president of overseas operations.

Willis, who spoke during an Epic Partners commissioning service in Asia in mid-October, said rethinking the concept is simple.

"We must meet people on their own terms," Willis said. "Where is the barrier? Is it in

them or in us? The difficulty lies with us, the literates. We've been handicapped by literacy. We've got to lay that aside and communicate in a manner that connects with the people we are trying to reach — and that is through orality."

If manufacturers can sell products in the most remote parts of the globe, why shouldn't the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ also be available, Campus Crusade President Steve Douglass asked.

"We've spent millions of budget dollars on unreached people groups," Douglass said. "Why can't we reach them? If Coca Cola can do it, why can't [the message of] Jesus Christ?"

Because Epic Partners personnel will be working in locations that are often dangerous and Gospel-resistant, the ministry destinations of the new workers could not even be discussed at the commissioning service. Attendees ended the service by encircling each person, family and team to pray for guidance and protection.

Each participating organization brings its own unique ministry tools to the table:

- In the past few years, Wycliffe Bible Translators has found ways to accelerate the

process of putting Bible stories into the heart language of an unreached people group.

- YWAM excels in training young people and nationals to be enthusiastic soul-winners.

- Campus Crusade is known for its longstanding commitment to evangelistic audio-visual products, such as the "JESUS" film, and facilitating local peoples and partnerships.

- The IMB specializes in church-planting strategies and has conducted nearly two decades of research on orality and chronological Bible storying.

"We're seeing that we can get the job done," Douglass said, noting that although these four groups founded Epic Partners, they believe others also will catch the vision and come alongside the work.

"What we're committed to doing at Epic Partners is passing the ball. We're not ball-hogging. That's how you win," Douglass said, adding that the task will be completed through the involvement of the local church "taking the ball" and maximizing the use of resources and funds.

"A new wave in missions is coming," Douglass added. "It can crush, or it can be ridden. If the wave is ridden, there is no limit to what we can see. We will not see increases of 10 percent, but a 10-time increase."

The Epic Partners commissioning service officially launched that wave of missions advance — primarily focusing on South Asia. Some of the field workers commissioned are self-supporting volunteers while others are financially supported by the parent organization. All received training through their individual sending entities before beginning specialized training in issues of orality.

Organizers envision three types of projects:

- Epic Ventures: a team or teams working with existing field personnel among an unreached people group to assess the need for a chronological storying approach.

- Epic Quests: partners jointly engaging an unreached people group through a two-year program with a chronological storying approach to church planting.

- Epic Journeys: short-term evangelism and church-planting initiatives using audio recordings of Bible stories produced by an Epic Venture or Epic Quest project.

"I've been a part of commissioning about 7,000 people over the past 10 years," Willis said. "I don't know if there is a group I'm more pleased to see go out than this Epic group."



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THANKFUL FOR PAIN

Most of us will do anything we can to stay away from pain. It seems rather clear to me that some people can tolerate pain better than others, and for the most part men seem to have a lower threshold of pain than women do (especially mothers). A dad can have a severe hang nail and need to be off from work a couple of days, while a mother can have the flu and a double migraine and get up, fix breakfast, and get the kids off to school. All of us want to avoid pain and when we have it, we want to get rid of it. Have you ever looked and listened to all of the pain eradication ads? Aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, Aleve, and on and on the list goes. Each of them promises to solve your head problems, joint problems, tired muscle problems, and get rid of whatever pain you may have. We think pain is bad, but actually it is good.

Recently, there was a story on the news about a little girl named Ashley Blocker. Ashley has a very rare medical condition that results in her not being able to feel pain. She can get a cut, a bruise, or a scratch from something on the playground, or even get sand in her eye, and she does not feel anything. While you may think that sounds like a good thing, it is not. When the kids go out on the playground and Ashley joins them, she has to report to the school nurse after she gets through playing. They check to see if she has any bruises or scrapes. They also look into her eyes to check for foreign particles or sand or dust. They make sure they wash her feet and no grains of sand are present that could wear a spot or create a bruise or blister on her foot because she would not know it. She can touch something hot and not feel anything. Unknowingly,



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

she can bite her own lip and create a real problem. The doctors say there are only about a hundred people on the planet that have this condition.

The more you think about it the more you have reason to be thankful that you do feel pain. Isn't it amazing how God created us with a mechanism of pain and so many different expressions so that we will be able to take care of ourselves? Think about what pain does. For one thing pain announces that something is going wrong. If you go out and overwork in the yard, shoveling and raking, it might not be long until your hands will begin to produce blisters and announce to you that you are severely overdoing it. You may have a severe pain in a tooth that is announcing to you that there is an infection or problem that needs attention. A headache, an earache, a stomach ache, a backache, or a foot that aches are all trying to tell you that what you are doing is creating a problem. Something is going wrong.

Another thing pain does that proves to be very helpful is that it points to where the problem is. Sometimes it is not easy to find the source of the pain, but usually you can figure it out. You probably have heard of the fellow who went to the doctor and told the doctor that his whole body was in pain. The doctor said, "What do you mean?" He took his finger, put it on his

cheek, and said, "I have pain here." He put his finger on his shoulder and said, "I have pain here." He put his finger on his foot and said, "I have pain here." He put his finger on his other hand and said, "I have pain here." Come to find out it was actually just a pain in his finger.

As we think about pain helping focus on where the problem is, it might do us good to remember that the church is the body of Christ. Now, just like in those early days recorded in the Book of Acts, there are times, experiences, events, and trials that may bring pain to certain parts of the body. When that happens God has designed us so that wherever the pain is all of the body recognizes it and becomes sympathetic. Have you ever watched someone hammering a nail, miss, and hit his thumb? It is amazing how the whole body reacts. Of course, the voice box gets involved and starts making moans, groans, and hollers. Usually, the first thing that happens is that the hand that you did not hit reaches over and grabs the thumb. Of course, that does not alleviate the pain and so you try another procedure and stick your thumb in your mouth and that may not sound like it helps any, but somehow it does. Then as the pain continues and increases in the thumb the feet often get involved and you start doing a little dance. Again, that does not seem like it would help but actually it does. When the body of Christ is in

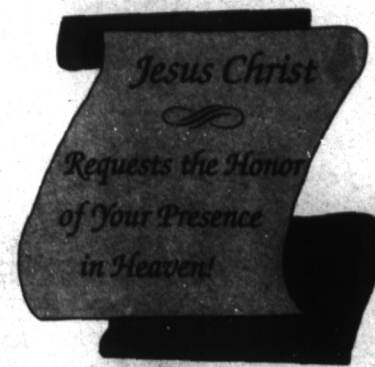
pain, all of the body should care. Another thing that pain does that helps us is it is usually possessive. I mean if things are going wrong, it begins to hurt a little bit, and if you do not pay any attention to it, just hang on it will get bigger, louder, and usually get your attention.

One final thing about pain is that it is helpful. We want to stay away from whatever it was that created the pain. One of the strange and bazaar aspects of people who have a drinking problem is all of the pain they go through after they have been on a binge. Their head hurts, their body hurts, and they must deal with the consequences that come because they missed work or they inflicted problems on the family. They go through all of that, turn around, and decide to do it again. Most of the time in most areas of life when we know the severe pain accompanying an experience we tend to say, "I don't believe I need that."

Little Ashley Blocker doesn't know what you and I know about pain and how to deal with it. I say she doesn't, but she really does in another dimension of her life. While she may not know if you stick her with a pin, her parents were asked, "Does she ever cry?" Her dad smiled and said, "Yes, if you hurt her feelings." That is another area of life that most of us probably know more about than we wish we did.

Today might be a good time to pause and thank God for some of the pains we experience in life. Thank Him for the pains that cause us to do something to alleviate the greater pains and the pains that help us to avoid the disastrous pitfalls that we might have experienced.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Special Lottie artifact donated to seminary

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — The Global Missions Center at New Orleans Seminary recently received a piece of mission history. A friend of the seminary donated a roof tile from a school started in China by Southern Baptist missions pioneer Lottie Moon.

Philip Pinckard, associate professor of missions and director of the center, hopes the link to Lottie Moon will create additional excitement about global missions efforts.

"It is a great privilege and honor for the seminary to have a tangible reminder of the sacrifice and love of Lottie Moon to share the Gospel with those who did not know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord," said Pinckard, director of the Global Missions Center and associate professor of missions at the seminary.

He added that the tile would remind those on campus of the continuing need to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

The Global Missions Center, launched in 2003, conducts missions research, provides training and resources, and works to reach un-evangelized areas of the world. The center also promotes long- and short-term mission opportunities among students and faculty members.

The donor, a committed Southern Baptist who wished to remain anonymous, was given

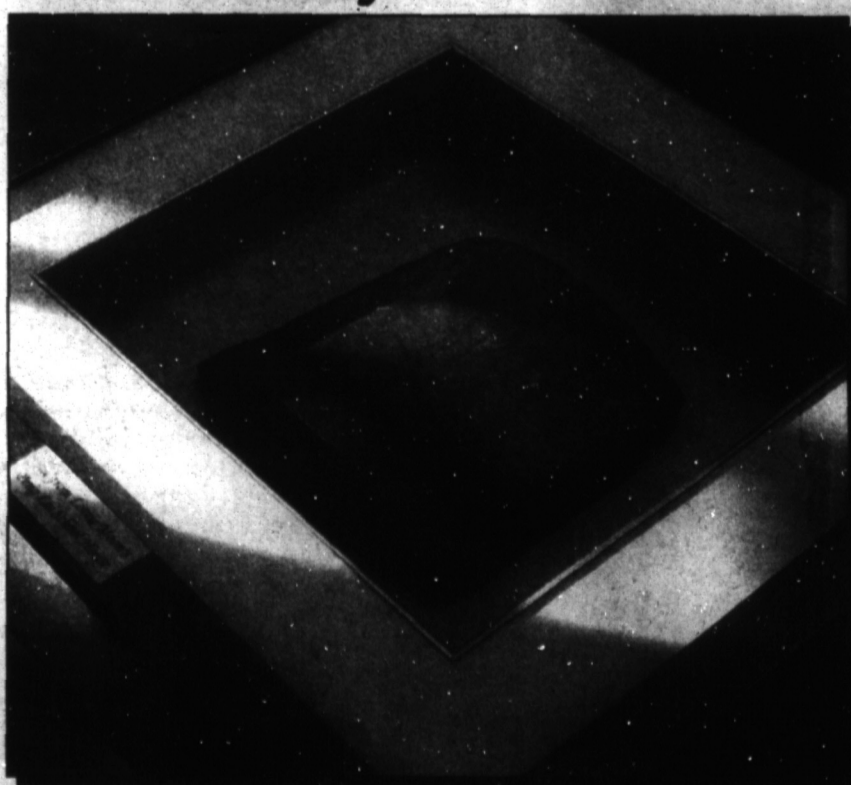
the tile during a trip to China. The tile came from a schoolhouse started by Moon in Tengchow (now call Penglai) Shandong Province. Moon used the building, which is no longer standing, to train Chinese girls.

A pioneer in Southern Baptist missions, Moon was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board (now called the International Mission Board) to serve in China in 1873. Her pleas for financial support and additional personnel led to a mission offering around Christmas of 1888. Churches in the South gave enough money to fund three additional missionaries.

Moon gave her life serving on the mission field. Weak and in poor health after a terrible famine in China, Moon left for the United States in 1912. She made it to the harbor at Kobe, Japan, and died on a ship in the harbor on Christmas Eve 1912.

Each Christmas, Southern Baptist churches honor her memory by giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. The offering raised a record \$136.2 million this year. Fully 100% of gifts to the Lottie Moon Offering are used to support the work of the International Mission Board around the world.

The small roof tile is displayed in the World Missions Resource Center in the John T. Christian Library at the seminary.



SPECIAL DONATION — A roof tile from Lottie Moon's school for girls in Tengchow, China, recently was donated to the Global Mission Center at New Orleans Seminary. (BP photo by Bobby Chandler)



Coxwell and Ramage, pastor



Newman, Williamson, Waggoner, Moore, and Tolleson



Sardis Church Fall Festival, Hazlehurst



GAs of First Church Glendale, Hattiesburg

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JUST FOR THE RECORD

Conehatta Church, recently ordained David Bounds and Clay Wall as deacons. A reception was held October 9 in their honor. Steve Moore is pastor.

Parkway Church, Hernando, held a deacon ordination November 14. Pictured (from left) are Stuart Coxwell and Mike Ramage, pastor.

W. Levon Moore (seated, right) and Paul B. Williamson, Jr. (seated, left) have been named to honorary positions of AMD emeritus of Attala Association. Making the plaque presentations are Johnnie Tolleson and Ed Newman. Bobby Waggoner (center) is the current AMD. The honorary titles were conferred upon them at the recent 144th annual session of the Attala Association held at Parkway Church.

Cash Church, Scott Association, observed Old Time Religion Day October 31. Pictured are the church people who dressed up for the day.

Staff Change

East Howard Church, Biloxi, welcomes Martin Britt as pastor. Britt also serves as program manager, teacher, and counselor with the Home of Grace Christian Recovery Program for Men in Vancleave.

Britt

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The GAs of **First Church of Glendale, Hattiesburg,** were presented with their World Venture Awards during a recognition service in September. Pictured are the GAs and their leader.

Randolph Church, honored **Gerald Waldrop** with a reception for his 30th year as minister of music in October. Pictured (from left) are Gerald Finley,

pastor, Waldrop, Bobby Cobb, and Joe Epting.

The **WMU of Sardis Church, Hazlehurst,** sponsored a Fall Festival for community children October 30. There were booths, pony rides, hay rides, and hot dogs and snacks were served. Approximately 65 attended. Pictured are some of the children having their faces painted.



Members of Cash Church, Scott Association



Conehatta Church Deacon Ordination, Conehatta



Finley, pastor; Waldrop, Cobb and Epting

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Mayday for Marriage, Canaan Church, Columbus



Youth of Edwards Church, Edwards



Mission Friends of Canton Church, Canton



Carolyn Tydale and Sara Skelton



GAs and RAs of North Carrollton Church, Carrollton

Edwards Church, Edwards, participated in the recent "Welcome Home Otis Harris Day" parade and festivities honoring Otis Harris, gold and silver Olympic medalist. Shown driving is deacon chairman Larry Dickson and several young people.

Macedonia Church, Petal, will present Testify with Kenneth Swanner, Landon

Thompson, and Brent Swanner December 5 at 6 p.m. For more information, call (601) 545-3110.

The Mission Friends of First Church, Canton, recently worked on Operation Christmas Child for Samaritan's Purse. Mission Friends prayed for the children all over the world who would receive their boxes for Christmas. Pictured (from left,



Testify

front) are Leah Brooke Irby, Sarah Sanders, Macy Gordy, Ben Barr, Drew Galloway, (back) Faith Galloway, Kylee Harrel, Melanie Crum, Carleigh Crosby, Lauren Anderson, and Teresa Crum.

Mt. Pisgah Church, Carroll County, recently emphasized the Margaret Lackey State



Howard, Tingle, Wilson, and Cochran

Mission. Pictured (from left) are Carolyn Tydale and Sara Skelton with their hats decorated with pledge envelopes.

Lowrey Memorial Church, Blue Mountain held their 125th Anniversary Celebration November 7. Tom Sumrall is pastor.

Calvary Church, Fulton, has received a helping hand from seven members of the Macedonia Church Men's Brotherhood, Petal. The men, Glenn Davis, Russ Ford, Mike Cameron, Lamar Dunn, Roy Keyes, Earl Newman, and Harry Hinton, are helping Calvary complete their church building which has been under construction since the fall of 2003. Roger Kennedy is pastor at Calvary.

The GAs and RAs of North Carrollton Church, North Carrollton, held a bake sale to raise money for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering recently. They raised \$247.50. Pictured (from left, front) are Kayla Davis, Maggie Lloyd, Chloe Bush, Payton Neal, Katie Holman, Laynee Claire Marchant, Allie Dunn, (back) Wesley Davis, Marlee Miller, Ann Marie McClain, and Jessica Miller.

Gatesville Church, Crystal Springs, recently awarded Sunday School perfect attendance pins. Pictured are Bobby Strieff, Sunday School Director, Olivetti Roberts, 7 years; Willie Mae Hinton, 7 years; and Margie Spraberry.

First Church, Gautier, held a deacon ordination September 26. David W. Aultman is pastor. Pictured (from left) are Vincent Howard, David Tingle, Scott Wilson, and Caleb Cochran.

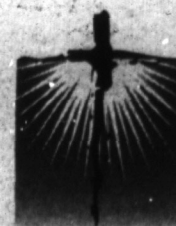
A group from Canaan Church, Columbus, traveled to Washington, D.C., October 13-16 for the Mayday for Marriage Rally October 15. The group included David and Brenda Westmoreland, George and Virginia Smith, Shorty and Adele Yearby, John and Rose Hill, Tommy Doughty, and Wesley Merideth.



Strieff, Roberts, Hinton, and Spraberry



Lowrey 125th Anniversary, Blue Mountain College



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

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David, Carrie McDonnall: call to missions

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Much has been written about the tragic day when five International Mission Board workers were shot in northern Iraq. David McDonnall, Larry and Jean Elliot, and Karen Watson were killed and McDonnall's wife Carrie was critically wounded when their vehicle was ambushed by assailants brandishing automatic weapons.

Less has been told about the early words of Good News that these men and women of God carried into a country darkened by the shroud of a dictatorship. This is an account of the McDonnalls' work in Iraq before the shooting.

David and Carrie both knew the potential dangers that lurked in Iraq. They heard the daily reports of continued fighting. They knew it would not be easy. But they were also confident in God's call to go there and carry His light to the Iraqi people.

"We went out of response to God saying, 'I want you there,'" Carrie said.

In June 2003, the newlywed couple led a team of Southwestern Seminary students to Iraq. David was a student at the Fort Worth seminary and Carrie had taken classes as well. Both were familiar with the Arabic language and culture in the North Africa/Middle East region because both had already spent two years of service there with the International Mission Board (IMB). David's proficiency in the Arabic language was becoming well-known.

David and Carrie loved the people there, and their love not only gave them greater ease in leading the team but also spurred their desire to return again to the region. "We both were just at a place where we wanted to be on the field more than anything because that's where our heart was," Carrie said.



WATERS OF IRAQ — David McDonnall accommodates a photographic moment for his wife Carrie during their time of service to needy Iraqis, which was tragically cut short in March of this year during a drive-by shooting near Mosul. (BP photo courtesy of Southwestern News)

Following the 2003 trip to Iraq with the Southwestern team, the McDonnalls returned to America and settled back into a routine of classes, work and an apartment ministry. They planned on David finishing the 20 hours he needed to complete his master's degree at Southwestern and then they would return to the field.

An early autumn phone call changed everything. The McDonnalls were asked to return to Iraq as soon as possible to help in the work there. Since the request was unexpected, the couple decided they needed to spend the next day fasting and praying separately. They would then come together to share what they had heard from God.

They agreed to pack up and move to Iraq by the end of November. God opened the doors for them to leave the commitments they already had. They

had confirmation after confirmation about their calling, but some people still expressed concern for their safety and urged them not to go. The couple knew, however, they were supposed to be in Iraq.

"You go into a place that is so dark and a place that just does not have hope, and you go and you offer hope and you offer it because you have the love of Christ in you," she said. "People see that. They ask, 'Why do you

do this?' We tell them, 'I love the Iraqi people and I love them because Christ loves me.' The people just don't have a hope, and some of that stems from being under Saddam and some of it is just from the fact that they don't know Christ...

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Fledgling movement leads to opposition, persecution

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Most of the Southern Baptists in the crowd never saw his face, but they may remember seeing and hearing his story at this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis.

Abdul (not his real name), a South Asian Muslim who turned to Christ, helped spark a movement in his homeland that has changed thousands of lives for Jesus Christ. His story was depicted in a video dramatization before he walked on stage.

Abdul spoke with his back to the crowd to protect his identity and answered questions from

International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin. Standing next to Abdul was retired missionary Tom Thurman, who led him to the Lord years ago.

Abdul told stories about persecution and martyrdom. One of his childhood friends was among nine evangelists in the movement murdered for their faith. Despite persecution, the ministry had more than 400,000 followers and 9,000 churches at that time.

Three months after Abdul shared his story at the convention, word has come of amazing growth within the ministry — and increased opposition.

Despite the opposition to Abdul, the movement has continued growing. Abdul recently crossed a border into another area of South Asia to share the Gospel.

Today, the number of believers and churches involved with the ministry has ballooned, says a missionary who has worked closely with Abdul on the field. "The movement has grown so quickly, we have found it almost impossible to have 'actual' numbers," he said.

Abdul's enemies also have continued to increase. "He called today to let us know that

he has received some very specific threats against his life, his family and others who work with him," the worker said. "These threats are actually being [left] on his mobile telephone — so they even have his number."

In addition to the death threats, 63 Christian men who are involved in the ministry were arrested recently. All of the men remain imprisoned.

"In the past when Abdul's people were placed in jail, [Christians] would scramble to raise money to get them out. It is different this time," another worker said.

Instead of paying for lawyers and various court fees, any money that is raised is going to the men's families, the worker says. Each wife will receive about \$20 for food while the men are in jail. This amount should maintain an average-sized family for two to three weeks.

"They are thinking that God has placed all of these men in jail for a purpose," the worker added. "We feel confident that incredible things are taking place inside the jails. When the 63 men get out, we will hear their stories."

The worker asked that Southern Baptists continue to pray for Abdul and his family, the 63 imprisoned men and their families, and the prison guards.

COLLEGE AND SEMINARY NEWS

The William Carey College Theatre and the Winters School of Music will present *Sleeping Beauty* by Jim Eiler December 9 at 6 p.m., Dec. 10 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 11 at 10 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 3 p.m., and 7 p.m. in the O. L. Quave Theatre, Hattiesburg campus. Admission is \$5. Tickets can be reserved by calling (601) 318-6221 beginning December 6. The box office is open from 1-4 p.m. Seats may be available at the door.

Blue Mountain College's Miss BMC Court was recognized during recent campus

activities. Members of the 2004 court include: (pictured from left) Sheria Boyd, Jessica Worsham, Amy Ledbetter, Tiffany Middleton, Miss BMC Faith Moore, Maid of Honor Sheree McDowell, Heather Rose, Katie Walker, Andrea Moore, and Jesika Hill.

William Carey College students, faculty and staff recently heard first hand accounts of Mississippi Woman's College alumni as they spoke of the historic name change the college underwent in 1954 when the all woman college became WCC, a

co-educational institution. Any event information can be obtained by calling (601) 318-6107. Pictured (from left) are Gene Winters, Ralph Noonkester, Ruth Monk Caldwell, Doyle Wheat, and Bennie Crockett.

Five William Carey College students received first place awards at the annual Mississippi Music Teachers Association Competition held recently in Jackson. The WCC Jazz Guitar Ensemble won a second place award in the junior/senior Jazz Ensemble

Competition. Pictured (from left, front) are Armin Abdihodzic, Brit Bartels, (back) Paulina Puljek, Miroslav Loncar, and Cole Beilmann.

The Christian Legal Society at the Mississippi College School of Law hosted Al Jernigan of the United States Department of Justice who spoke about Christian Values in the Workplace on November 16 at their weekly meeting.

Revival

Cowart, Charleston: Revival December 1-5; Wed.-Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.; Truman Scarborough, North Central Association, evangelist; Charles and Melissa Ball, music; for more information, call (662) 647-2716 or (662) 647-5271.



BMC Court, Blue Mountain College



William Carey College MMTAC Award Winners



Winters, Noonkester, Caldwell, Wheat, and Crockett

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PASTOR: CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, Tuscumbia, Alabama. Currently accepting resumes for full-time pastor. Please send resume to pastor search committee, 601 N. Main Street, Tuscumbia, AL 35674. Resumes will be taken until January 1, 2005.

MINISTER OF MUSIC AND YOUTH: Aliceville First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister to serve and equip our church in music and youth ministries. Please send resumes to search committee, 323 Broad Street, Aliceville, AL 35442. Or call (205) 373-2386 for more information.

CHURCH PEW UPHOLSTERY, free estimates. Davis Upholstery, Quitman, Miss., phone (601) 776-6617.

MS POSITIONS

CHURCH ORGANIST: DANIEL Memorial Baptist Church is seeking an organist for the Sunday School services in south Jackson. Send resumes to personnel committee chairman, Randy Green, 3784 Terry Road, Jackson, MS 39212.

MAIN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, Goodman, Miss., is currently seeking a full-time pastor. A traditional SBC, resident membership 95. Send resumes or contact to Main Street Baptist Church, pastor search committee, Billy May, chairman, P.O. Box 206, Goodman, MS 39079.

FBC MAGEE IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME youth and recreation minister.

Send resumes to FBC Magee, Attn: youth minister committee, P.O. Box 266, Magee, MS 39114.

IS MUSIC YOUR MINISTRY? Do you have a heart for youth? Immanuel Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Miss., is accepting resumes for minister of music/youth/education. Send to personnel committee chairman, Immanuel Baptist Church, 6949 Hwy 61 South, Vicksburg, MS 39180.

PART-TIME PASTOR: PLEASANT RIDGE Baptist Church. Please send resume to Robby Garver, chairman, pastor search committee, 24543 Hwy 12 E., Lexington, MS 39095, phone (662) 834-2871.

India overflowing with need for Gospel



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International
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and

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Nov. 28-Dec. 5, 2004

**Lottie Moon
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National Goal:
\$150 million

Our Goal:

FALSE WORSHIP — During prayers at the holy river of Shipra during the largest Hindu festival in India, seekers offer fire to their false gods in an effort to curry favor with the gods. (IMB photo by Matt Jones)

MUMBAI, India — Where can you find thousands of millionaires, and nine of the world's richest billionaires? India.

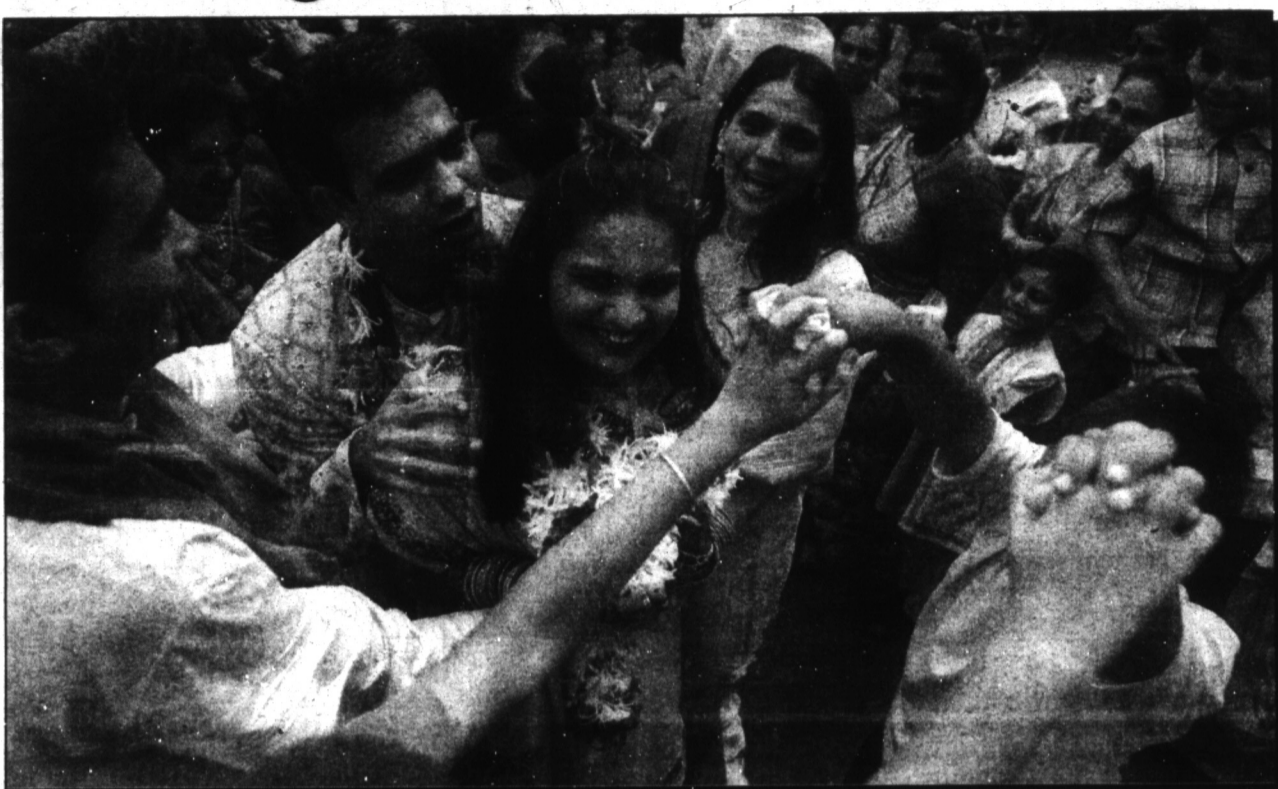
Who makes more movies than Hollywood? India — by far. "Bollywood," the vast film industry based in Bombay (now Mumbai) churns out about 1,000 pictures a year, roughly twice as many as Hollywood. Hindi movies burst with melodrama, action, sexy stars, and big musical production numbers, and gross \$3.5 billion a year in worldwide ticket sales.

Which nation boasts the world's biggest democracy? India — and it still works, as demonstrated by this year's stunning upset victory by the underdog Congress Party over the ruling Hindu nationalist alliance.

Which country now counts more than 24 million Christians (nearly 19 million of whom are evangelicals)? You guessed it: India.

If your most vivid impressions of India come from old National Geographic and Rudyard Kipling's jungle stories, update your mental file with these facts:

- India's 1.07 billion people, second only to China in total population, are 80% Hindu. In addition, more than 130 million Muslims call India home (some estimates range above 150 million). That rivals the combined population of all countries in the Arab Middle East.
- Indian teenagers spend three billion dollars a year on fashion accessories.
- The Indian middle class (those earning \$2,000-\$4,000 annually) now numbers 300 million — larger than the entire U.S. population. It's expected to approach 450 million within the next five years.
- Massive rural-to-urban migration will likely double the population of India's cities within two decades. That's equal to "all of Europe, all of a sudden, needing water, sanitation, drainage, power, transportation, housing," says an Asian Development Bank official.



HAPPY TIME — Weddings in Mumbai are times of great celebration. Festivities begin with a parade through the streets that can last up to two hours. A small band plays while family and friends dance, march, laugh, and enjoy each others' company. (IMB photo by Matt Jones)

- Want to tap into a youth movement of gargantuan proportions? No fewer than 555 million Indians are under age 25.
- Indian universities produce more than 1.5 million graduates each year.
- The booming Indian economy was forecast to grow eight percent this year as Indian industries match or surpass some of the world's top producers.
- India has some 200 million English speakers. The nation's vast collection of peoples also speak several hundred other languages and dialects.
- Three Indians made Time magazine's list of the world's 100 most powerful and influential people this year: Bollywood superstar Aishwarya Rai, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and IT industry mogul Azim Premji (reputedly the world's fourth-richest man).

Make no mistake: India still faces enormous problems of poverty and need. The poor in some 800,000 towns and villages still account for the great majority of the population. About 300 million people live on less than a dollar a day. As many as 3,000 Indian farmers in a single state (Andhra Pradesh) have killed themselves over the last six years because of debt and drought.

India has the world's largest number of working children (up to 115 million); many toil in sweatshops. At least half of the population cannot read. Meanwhile, many of the graduates pouring out of the nation's universities can't find decent jobs. Despite economic growth, too many applicants are competing for too few positions. The government counts 40 million jobless workers, while the vaunted Indian info tech industry employs fewer than one million.

However, India has made amazing progress on many fronts — economic expansion, education, technology. Its scientists, academics, computer specialists, entrepreneurs, and entertainers are challenging and often surpassing the best other countries can offer. Expectations are soaring.

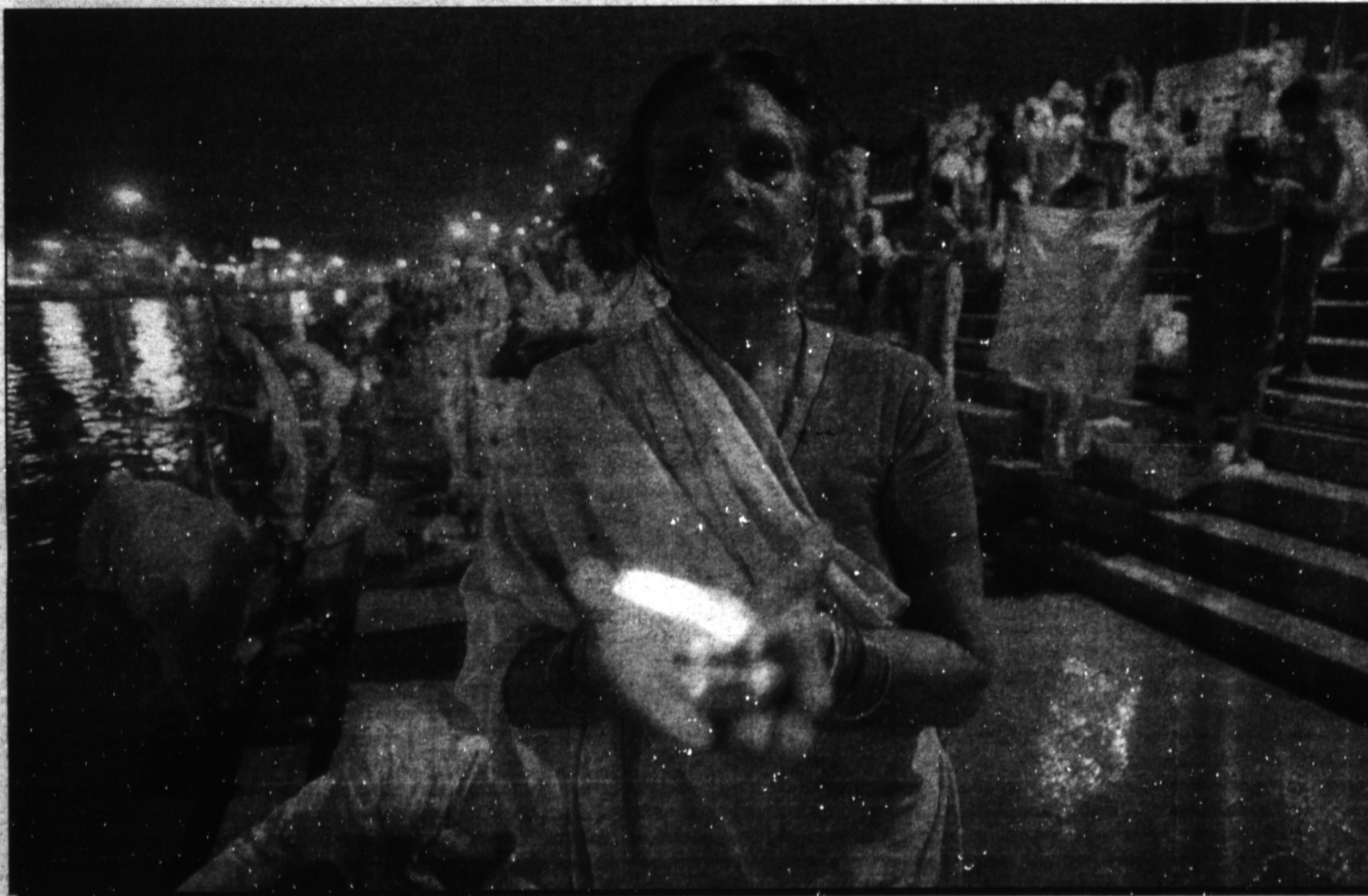
Even a thousand lifetimes dedicated to spreading the Gospel won't make a real dent in India — unless they are lives focused on multiplying disciples and churches.

India's 24-million-member Christian community is growing, but remains a small minority of the national population of 1.07 billion. Nearly half of the world's unreached people groups live in India and the South Asian region. They have yet to be touched by the gospel in any significant way.

"As India goes, so goes the Great Commission," contends a Christian strategist, "and how is India doing? Not that well, quite frankly. Not because it's inaccessible; because it's neglected. If this is truly the last of the giants, God is giving it to us on a silver platter. It is a friendly place, an inviting place."

"There is no excuse for not getting the Gospel out here. I'm overwhelmed at the openness. This is an incredibly responsive place. We just need more people implementing church-planting movement strategies."

"Our job," says a believer, "is to turn on the light, turn on the light, turn on the light!"



FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Tell about God

Psalm 145:3-5,8-9,11-21

By Geneva England

"The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love" (v.8, NIV)

What a wonderful revelation about our loving God! These four attributes of God — gracious, compassionate, patient, and loving — are far more important to sinners today than they might realize. God's graciousness speaks of His grace, offering salvation to undeserving lost sinners. This was the gift of supreme love.

Humans have tried the patience of God in every generation by their ungodly acts, even to shaking their fists in the face of God sometimes; but God has withheld His final judgment on these until His special appointed time. God's patience and His love provide

ample time for sinners to repent of their sins.

Thus, this verse, in David's final song in the book of Psalms, summarizes the great outpouring of his praise to God. In fact, Psalm 145 serves as the great crescendo to David's magnificent, musical composition!

I. GOD'S GRACE (PSALM 145: 3-5, 8-9)

Grace, defined as receiving undeserved favor, comes from both a Hebrew noun and verb most often translated as "grace," "favor," "favorable," or "merciful." The noun form occurs some 69 times and the verb some 56 times in the Old Testament (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary). God's grace cannot be measured because humankind can not comprehend the mercy, love, compassion, and patience



England

that God extends to them. These verses further expand on God's righteousness and kindness expressed specifically in His "mighty acts" (v. 4), "wonderful works" (v. 5), and "awesome works" (v. 6, NIV). These superlatives are David's attempt to attribute supremacy to God. David had personally experienced God's grace and mercy as had Moses when God revealed some of His glory to him. Hence, David's praise (v. 8) closely follows that of Exodus 34:6: "The Lord, The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (NIV).

II. GOD'S KINGDOM (Ps. 145: 11-13)

God's "kingdom" (v. 11) encompasses His eternal reign: before creation, presently over the outcome of human history, and over the future kingdom in great power, when "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he

will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, NIV). God's righteousness, as well as His judgment, covers all, an inclusive word used thirteen times in this psalm.

III. HIS HELP AND LOVE (Ps. 145:14-21)

David may have been recalling specific occasions when he penned "The Lord upholdeth all that fall" (v. 14): God delivered David from being harmed by the angry King Saul; God lifted David up when he had fallen into adulterous sin with Bathsheba; and God gave him victory over strong enemies. Today, we read of God's presence and help being felt by many, especially by our foreign missionaries, some of whom have been mistreated and imprisoned without just cause. We hear of saintly people receiving miraculous cures, often baffling the doctors.

God's divine qualities include dependability, His unchanging nature, and His unfailing love. Verse 16 states that "every living thing" is satisfied because God sustains all of His creations. Hence, believers, as well as unbelievers, enjoy the provisions of God.

God's help "is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth" (v. 18). This does not mean "name it and claim it." It does mean that those who walk in close communion with God can ask "according to His will" (1 Jn. 5:14) and in the name of Jesus (Jn. 14:13) and that God will grant according to His divine plan.

Why does God continue to love and protect His creation? Because He is a merciful God — full of righteousness and loving-kindness. David points out four specific aspects of life that testify to God's constancy: (1) His help (v. 14), His provisions for all creatures (vv. 15-16), His closeness to those who pray in truth (vv. 18-19), and His protection for His own (v. 20).

In concluding this psalm, David gave a personal testimony of praise, but challenged "all flesh" to bless the holy name of God forever. That's exactly what we should do every day of our lives — exalt the name of Jesus above all names.

England is a member of First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A New Concern

Luke 13:1-9, 32-35

By James Walters

People who think they have a corner on truth often act arrogantly. They may feel pity for others, but do nothing redemptive to help them. Sometimes they simply think they are too good to soil their hands helping the down and out. Sadly, these attitudes are found among some Christians. We may need reminding that we are saved by grace through faith, not by any merit of our own good behavior. God treats all people much better than they deserve. Christians are to be concerned about the spiritual condition of all people regardless of the degree of their sinfulness.

EVERYONE IS A SINNER, LUKE 13:1-5

Jesus was concerned for people. There were those following Him who held opinions much like some I have heard. Whether it is a car bombing or a plane crash we tend to lean toward the

notion that those who died were singled out by God to die. It is an ancient belief.

In Acts 28:4, Paul and the ship's crew survived a wreck. They built a fire on the shore. A snake bit Paul's hand and people reasoned that though he had escaped God's judgment at sea, yet because he was a murderer, justice had caught up with him. They were, of course, wrong. Snakes can't tell a Christian from a heathen!

Job's friends were also wrong. They told him that things would be going well with him if he had not sinned against God; that no man does good and suffers for it as Job was; or does evil and escapes the judgment of God. Good people do suffer, however, and Judgment Day is not in this life.

Jesus challenged popular thinking that some individuals who died at Pilate's hand and some who died when a tower



Walters

collapsed were worse sinners than others. He called upon everyone to repent. Life happens. People die. Good people die every day of heart disease and cancer. No one is exempt. We must heed Jesus' stern warning of the need to repent.

We hear of the sufferings and losses of so many, and that should underscore the likelihood that we may be the next to go. Why not us? Are we too good to have a fatal accident? Young or old, short or tall, doesn't matter. Expecting life to treat us differently and make an exception of us is like expecting the bull not to charge us, because we are vegetarians. The bull doesn't know!

EVERYONE WILL BE JUDGED, LUKE 13:6-9

Jesus told a parable about a fig tree that was to be cut down for not being fruitful. The caretaker of the vineyard asked for one more year of intensive labor about the tree to help it bear figs. He would dig, fertilize, and water it. Afterwards it would be cut down should it remain fruitless. It was given the chance to prove itself.

There are decorative trees which do not produce edible fruit. A Wild Olive produces no olives. A Weeping Fig produces no figs. I have a hybrid Apricot tree in my backyard with beautiful red leaves that does not produce apricots. Why? It is merely for landscaping. It looks good. It is useless for producing apricots, but it really is pretty.

If productivity is the test, appearance doesn't matter. How would we grade ourselves in terms of productivity and the Kingdom of God? Are we for show? Do we merely "show up" on Sunday morning for Church? We look like fig trees. I mean, we are on time, in class, bring our Bible, read our Bible. We sing. We come back Sunday night and on Wednesday for Prayer Meeting. We look like fig trees, but how long has it been since we've produced a fig?

EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE OUR CONCERN, LUKE 13:32-35

That His own people rejected Him broke Jesus' heart. He grieved over Jerusalem and its past history of turning away those whom God sent. Christ was deeply troubled by their behavior, and He was con-

cerned that something be done to reach them. He was determined to do God's work among them if it killed him.

Christ's example brings most of us up short. We may find it nearly impossible to care for people who repeatedly let us know they are not interested. Are there not more fruitful fields in which to labor? The furthest thing from many people's minds is the Kingdom of God. That is just a fact. Our Christlikeness may never be more challenged than when we focus our concern upon the spiritual condition of those who have hardened their heart.

Being Christlike means we have to care for those who may have stopped caring. They don't mind being left alone. One vivid picture of Christ in Revelation 3:20 is of Him standing before a closed door, knocking. Many people we know have closed the door, but too few of us are knocking. Since we consider ourselves Christians, why not go knock? Even the hard-hearted need to be on our concern list. They are people over whom Christ grieves.

Walters is member of Temple Church, Hattiesburg.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no

text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and

white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping.

Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 392-3330. e-mail: baptistrecord@mbc.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Graham revisits scene of crucial crusade

PASADENA, Calif. (BP) — Nearly 55 years to the day after ending a Los Angeles crusade that launched evangelist Billy Graham onto the national scene, he was back in Hollywood preaching the same timeless Gospel of grace and redemption Nov. 18.

one point on the scene that depicts Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Tears are coming down His cheek and He says to God, 'Father, take this cup from me, but not my will but your will be done,'" Graham said. "Then He looks in

Many who volunteered to be a part of this crusade did so knowing it was likely their last opportunity to participate in a Graham crusade. Larry Williams of First Baptist Church in Culver City said he had been watching Billy Graham on television since he was five years old and was excited to finally see him in person.

"It was awesome," Williams said. "I can't tell you how many times I have seen him on television, but it is nothing like seeing him in person." Williams served as a counselor on Thursday evening and had the opportunity to help a father and son who were making first-time commitments to Christ.

"They don't know what is in store for them," Williams said. "They have no idea how different their life is going to be from this day forward. To have a small part in that is a blessing."

The four-day event marks the ninth and final crusade for the 86-year-old evangelist in the Los Angeles area. Graham referred fondly to his first Los Angeles Crusade in 1949 when he came to the city as a 30-year-old. More than 350,000 people attended those crusade meetings over nearly a two-month span.

During the crusade a two-word memo, "Puff Graham," from newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst to his editors gave Graham the media attention he needed to extend the crusade beyond the expected three weeks. It also gave him national exposure through front-page articles in newspapers across the country.

In more than 65 years of ministry, Graham has preached to more than 210 million people in 185 countries. He has counseled every president, both Democrat and Republican, since Dwight Eisenhower. For 39 consecutive years and 46 times in all, Graham has been named one of the Ten Most Admired Men in the World by the Gallup organization.

The Los Angeles event is the second crusade in two months for Graham. In October he held a crusade in Kansas City. More than 86,000 people committed their life to Christ during that crusade.

He plans a final New York City crusade in June of 2005.



TIMELESS MESSAGE — People traveled great distances to attend the final Billy Graham crusade in the Los Angeles area beginning Nov. 18, and more than 2,000 of them made decisions for Christ during the invitation. The veteran evangelist has preached the Gospel to more than 210 million people in 185 countries in more than 65 years of ministry. (BP photo by Tobin Perry)

"God is saying tonight, 'I love you. No matter how bad you have been, I love you and I'll forgive you because of what Jesus did on the cross,'" Graham told more than 45,000 people at the famed Rose Bowl during the first of a four-night crusade designed to reach the country's second largest metropolis.

Some 2,500 people came forward to make a decision for Christ.

Graham centered his 30-minute message on the Passion and the meaning of the cross. He referred several times to Mel Gibson's hit movie *The Passion of the Christ* from earlier this year, focusing at

the cup. What did He see in the cup? He sees the sins of the whole world."

Though the Rose Bowl was not filled to capacity for the first night, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association spokesman Larry Ross told the Los Angeles Times that they expect the attendance to build.

Graham, who needed a walker and help getting to the pulpit during the evening, has struggled with poor health throughout the last few years. The Los Angeles crusade had been originally scheduled for July but was postponed after doctors decided he needed more time to heal from a fall last May.

Seminary study cites continued church plateauing

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — For some 20 years, a disturbing statistic has left its mark on Southern Baptists: 70% of Southern Baptist churches are plateaued or declining. A new study now has examined if the statistic remains true.

The new study, which was led by Bill Day, associate director of the New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health, ranked congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention according to frequently used definitions for growing, declining, and plateaued churches.

Growing churches are those whose total membership increased at least 10% over five years, while declining churches are those whose total membership decreased at least 10% over five years. A plateaued church is one that is in neither the growing nor the declining category.

From 1978-83, the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) found that 30.5% of churches were growing, 51.9% were plateaued

and 17.6% were in decline.

In the years studied by the Leavell Center, 1998-2003, 30.3% of churches were growing. Although that statistic has remained basically unchanged for 20 years, the number of declining Southern Baptist churches has increased by six percent from 17.6% to 23.9%. Plateaued churches now comprise 45.8% of all Southern Baptist churches.

According to the SBC's website, there are more than 42,000 Southern Baptist churches in the United States. Using the Leavell Center's findings, fewer than 13,000 of them are growing churches. In other words, 70% of Southern Baptist churches are still plateaued or declining.

However, there are some bright spots among the statistics. NOBTS President Chuck Kelley said the study found a few churches that recorded enormous growth between 1998 and 2003. Percentage growth in these churches ranged from 24.9% in Orlando's First Church to a whopping 3,122.6% in Stonegate Church in Midland, Texas.

"It is possible in this day and time to have a growing church," Kelley said. "However, the good news of 30% of our churches growing is really not that good."

Kelley said the Leavell Center's study unearthed a problem with the current definition of a growing church. Just because a church records a growth in total membership does not necessarily mean that church is healthy.

"Here's the reality: 1,409 churches in the growing category reported no baptisms in 2003," Kelley said.

Those churches account for 11% of all "growing" churches. After removing those churches from the growing category, there are still "growing" churches that have a member to baptism ratio of more than 1,100 to one. Kelley's interpretation of this statistic: "That's shuffling Baptists from one church to another church."

Day, who also is associate professor of evangelism and church health at NOBTS, said he was shocked "to learn that a definition of a growing church

that our denomination has been using for over 20 years had such serious flaws. It became obvious to me that a new definition was needed."

Day outlined a potential new standard for a healthy growing church during a meeting of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship in September:

- a 10% total membership growth over five years.
- at least one baptism for the first and last years of the study.
- a member to baptism ratio of 35 or less to one in the final year of the study.
- conversions accounting for at least 25% of the total membership growth during the final year of the study.

What happens when these new criteria are added? Using the proposed definition, only 11% of all Southern Baptist churches (or little more than 4,600) qualify as healthy and growing.

To obtain a copy of the study, contact Bill Day at the Leavell Center by phone at (504) 282-4455, ext. 3320, or by e-mail at bday@nobts.edu.

Bibliocipher

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BEF HWSNSIJIT CXJIOW

BEF UICXIJOW XE DI

NWBCC EIIT FXI, UICXII-

NO OWSK OWXN?

YSWE ICIJE: OHIEOL-NXQ

Clue: J = V

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle:

Acts 13:39